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OFFICE OF CHIEF COUNSEL

MONTANA RAIL LINK, INC.
101 INTERNATIONAL WAY
POST OFFICE BOX 16390
MISSOULA, MONTANA 59808-6390
(406) 523-1500

March 28, 2002

FRA-2002-13967-1

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DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION
FRA-2002-13967-1

Al MacDowell
Federal Railroad Administration
1120 Vermont Avenue NW
Mail Stop 25
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Montana Rail Link Request for Waiver of Compliance Concerning Skirted, 6-Hole Joint Bars

Dear Mr. MacDowell:

This is a formal request for waiver of compliance to replace the 6-hole 115# skirted joint bars with cracks on Montana Rail Link's main line between Billings and Laurel, Montana, and between Helena and Tobin, Montana. The mileage involved is approximately 20 miles.

The trackage where these joint bars are found is on former Burlington Northern trackage through southern Montana. Prior to Burlington Northern, the trackage was Northern Pacific.

The skirted bars involved have spike notches between holes 1 and 2, and 5 and 6 that have developed cracks over the years. Some of these cracks have been there for many years, and some have actually developed into total breaks. However, even a total break between holes 1 and 2, or holes 5 and 6 are essentially a 24" bar.

As trackage and joint bars involved were formally Burlington Northern trackage prior to Montana Rail Link purchasing the property (1987), I submit that the bars are very similar or even exactly the same as tested by BNSF in their waiver request under docket #10653. We therefore request that the FRA allow the same test results as furnished by BNSF, be used in considering this waiver.

If there is any more information needed in this waiver request, please advise. Otherwise, I await your response to this request.

Sincerely,

Richard L. Keller
Chief Engineer

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